

PETITIONS AGAINST BISHOPS

And their Votes in Parliament,
subscrib'd unto after a Clandestine, deliver'd after
a tumultuous manner, and falsly going under the
name of a whole County or Towne, proved to be
both contrary to our late taken PROTESTA-
TION, as also utterly unlawfull by
many other cleere and evi-
dent Reasons.

First written for satisfaction of
some private men, and now published
for the good of others.

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By J. W.

LONDON,
Printed by A. N. for Richard Lowndes, at his shop
adjoyning to Ludgate, 1642.

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Mr. Cachism,

For your satisfaction , why I have severall times refused to subscribe your Petition , You may please to understand, that for the good of the Common-weal, Count-ty, or Parish wherein I live , I shall be al-ways ready and willing to give not only my hand, but my heart and purse likewise : For the publike welfare whereof I have beene both active and passive for severall yeares to-gether.

But for mee who am but a private Sub-ject, A Protestant , and no Law-maker , to give my hand in a Factious way, and with-out command from Authority, to will, that

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there shall be no Bishops, and that they shall have no voice in the House of Peeres, is against my Conscience, and that light of Reason and Vnderstanding which I have received: And I dare not comply with the Distempers of the people, and follow the stream of a Multitude to doe evill, on these grounds following.

First, Because I have by the Example and Recommendation of the Parliament, solemnly taken the Protestation: Whereby I have seriously Protested, to Maintaine and Defend as far as lawfully I may the true Reformed Protestant Religion, expressed in the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, against all Popery, and Popish innovations, contrary to the said Doctrine. Now in the thirtie sixth Article of the said expressed Doctrine, the Office of Bishops is inclusively confirmed.

Secondly, I am engaged thereby also, to mayntain and defend the Powers, and Privileges of Parliaments, which is chiefly to be understood of the established Laws concerning the same. Now severall Acts of Parliament

liament doe not only confirme, as aforesaid, the Office of a Bishop, but by the powers and privileges of those Acts of Parliament, they are also to sit as Members of the Lords House.

Thirdly, I am bound by the said Protection, to mayntain and defend the lawfull rights & liberties of the Subject (And if this extends to every subiect in particular, much more to Parliament Men) Now they being subjects, and their Rights and Liberties being lawfull, I am bound to mayntaine them as farre as lawfully I may, in those lawfull Rights and Liberties. Againe, the making and repealing of Laws, for the good of the Common-wealth, is a speciall and peculiar power, privilege, and right, proper only to Parliaments, therefore not to be forced or coaected by mee being no Parliament man. For that may be lawfull and warrantable in my Governours to do by reason, which is altogether unlawfull & unwarrantable in me to require by Will. This is rather to be a tyrannicall judge, then a legall Witness, to breake Lawes rather then preserve them,

them, and instead of Reformation to bring in Confusion.

Fourthly, I am likewise obliged to maintain and defend the Kings Royall Person, Honour, and Estate, and to preserve the Union and Peace betweene his three Kingdomes (much more amongst our selves.) Now there is no better way thereunto, then to keep his laws: For both the honour and safety of the King, the liberty and peace of the Kingdome, and welfare of them both, are involved in them.

Fiftly, I am engaged also to oppose, as far as lawfully I may, and by all good ways and meanes to bring to condigne punishment, all such as shall either by force, practice, Counsels, plots, or Conspiracies, do any thing to the contrary of any thing in that present Protestation contained. How then dare I be so farre from bringing to condigne punishment the offenders, that I shall wilfully consent to the breach of it, and procure others thereunto, by practice, plots, conspiracies or the like?

Sixthly, I am neither for hope, feare, favour,

your, or other respect whatsoever, to relinquish this promise, vow, and Protestation, much lesse to break it for the same ends, and to make others to doe the like ; This betraying others thereunto, and making them guilty of the breach of so solemn a Vow, is an offence of an high nature both to God and our Governours.

Finally, I am not bound in any Article thereof, farther then I may lawfully perform it, The Law being the harmonious scope, bounds, and limits of my Protestation; And therefore I may not unlawfully doe any thing that may tend to the breach or contradiction of any Article thereof.

Moreover, the manner of the proceeding doth not satisfie me.

First, Because it is not done in that right way it ought to be. For that which is to go under the name of a County or Towne, ought to be first assented unto by the Sheriff, Justice of peace, or other Magistrates respectively, and then the matter may be publicly propounded, and condiscended unto or contradicted, that men may be encouraged

ged or dissuaded, by good reasons *pro* and *con.*

And this is that lawfull and usuall way for Election of Knights and Burgesses for the Parliament, and of other Officers and Matters concerning the publike; Wherefore Clandestine and surreptitious actions, going about from house to house by night, and without the consent and commission of authority, to engage people to the breach of their protestation, and to make it as an act of a County or a Towne, and in a manner to force men thereunto, are but unlawfull works of darknesse, and will not endure the light.

Secondly, It is justly to be feared that these ways are sinister in the Vndertakers, being very probable that some of them doe it out of ill will, hatred and malice, as well to the Government as the Governours, or for favour and affection to some whom they suppose it pleaseth, or for gaine and profit, or feare of displeasure of Land-lords and Customers, or for vain glory, that it may be said, This is the *Babel* which they have wrought with

with their own hands. And some few of these shall engage and prejudice others (and not without cause as it is to be feared) by false informations and reasons to make men subscribe.

Thirdly, The like sinister proceedings are to be supposed in the subscriber.

These kinds of wayes by Tumults and Multitudes without legall allegations and probations to compasse that by will which you cannot obtaine by reason, is of a very dangerous consequence, and threatens the subversion of all Law, Government, and Governours, for which of them, bee they never so good, shall be secure, if the Multitude of distempered people please to will the contrary?

These cause much distractions, Hinder the proceeding of the State, and the relieve of the oppressed, break our blessed Vnitie, and bring the actors within the compasse of a punishment from the law of God and Man, for not walking accordiug to the expressed Statutes contained therein.

Furthermore, this doth not agree with

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that light of Reason, and Vnderstanding, which God hath given me to walk by, nor that Christian experiance which I have gained under the Crosse.

First, That for the vice or abuse of any thing, the right and lawfull use thereof, or execution of the office, should be abolished, and taken away, or that for the present particular offences of some, the innocent posterity shall suffer; For I am not convinced in my conscience of the unlawfulness of the Office of a Bishop, and am perswaded that there have beeene many of them godly and zealous Martyrs for the Truth, and many of them remayne still godly and religious protestants.

Secondly, Though time of prosperity hath made some of them guilty of soule offences, and it may be with the children of *Israel* they have not worshipped the true God as they ought, and have inclined to Idolatry, and thereby justly provoked the Almighty to wrath and indignation against them: Yet I am perswaded, that for the very execution of their Office, and the Ecclesiasticall

sticall laws, for the unitie and peace of the Church, they suffer instrumentally by divers ill affected to Government, or by such as have been punished by them for doing contrary thereunto. And if the like proceedings may be suffered against all Judges and other Executioners of the laws of the Kingdome, there shall bee no secure execution of the law against offenders, and so wee shall live lawlesse, and let in all manner of Disorder, and Vice, Murther, Rapine, and the like. Those Bishops rather (under correction) that have done contrary to the law, are to be punished by the law, on due & true proofs, and not according to your wils.

Thirdly, Because that which is or seems to be a prejudice now, may in Gods good time prove a great benefit, We many times earnestly pray for those things which afterwards we heartily give God thanks for not granting our requests, And this hath many times been for the removall of our present afflictions. I am confident if there were good care taken (as there may be) that good men may be made Bishops, wee shall never repent of

their lawfull office or place, for greatnessse with goodnessse will much advance the cause and welfare of the Church and Common-wealth, and farther, I know it is possible for some inferiours to execute the Law and the Gospell likewise, in a farre more imperious and Tyrannicall way then some Superiours have done.

Fourthly, That though there be Obstacles and Mountains in the way, and the supposed enemies of Gods Church and Children, yet as I am a Christian I dare not judge them, or curse them as many doe, or use any unlawfull means to remove them, (or under the pretence of pulling down one *Babell* to set up another:) What *David* did by way of prediction, as hee was a King and Prophet, against the invererate and incurable enemies of the Church of God, I as an ordinary Christian ought not to doe; I may live peradventure to see my enemies desert upon them, which I may not desire to see.

I am to judge charitably of the actions and intentions of my Governours, what I think peradventure is for my hurt, may be in.

intended, or at leastwile turned to my good, I must walke by the Rule of Gods Word, and follow the examples and precepts of my Saviour, *To pray for them that hate mee, and to doe good to them that persecute me,* And not forget to pray for all that are in authority, that I may live a godly life under them in all peace and quietnesse. Why may I not suspect that this long enjoyment of the Gospel in peace and plenty, hath produced evill effects in mee aswell as in my Governours? But be my Governours what they will I have learned to obey all their lawfull commands, and thank God that I may live under so happy a command; If they command me to do no otherwise then what is just and right, I must and will willingly doe it. Neither dare I neglect my duty to them, though they forget theirs to me: For their offences and neglects to mee shall not excuse mee to God nor them, for my offences and not performances of mine to either of them.

Fifthly, I dare not but look at the hand of God, & not at the instrument only of my afflictions,

afflictions, I know nothing can come to passe but by his permission. I am assured that sinne is the prime cause of all my sufferings, and I feare that ingratiude in not being thankfull, and walking worthy of those great mercies received, hath been a principall cause why God hath shut up the hearts of some of our Governours at this present, as is much feared.

Sixthly, I know God will correct his children for their sins, and in the execution of his judgments on the World he will begin at his owne house, either to worke out sin, or to worke in grace, or to make that Grace more manifest which is already wrought. I know that the end of Gods correction is Reformation, till then, if smaller afflictions will not prevaile greater shall, if not one kind then an other, if the sword of our enemies doe not, the swords peradventure of our own amongst our selves shal, if not they, peradventure the Pestilence, or the Famine, or some other shall. Sundry of which sometimes come together, to let the World know, that our afflictions come not

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immediate from any one secondary & instru-
mentall cause, but that it is from the wil and
pleasure of the Almighty so to order and to
dispose it, who will not take off his judge-
ments as the effects, till our sins as the causes
be removed.

Seventhly, I dare not use any unlawfull
means to ease my affliction, I know no bet-
ter way then by Humiliation and Prayer to
God for a sight of those sinnes whereby I
have provoked him to wrath, and for grace,
and true repentance for the same, and Re-
mission by the merits of my Saviour Jesus
Christ; And then to apply my selfe with all
diligence to all lawfull meanes to remove
them, yet I am not to put too much confi-
dence in them. I could never yet finde any
benefit by impatience under the hand of the
Almighty, I have found more afflictions
procured thereby, and I am assured that the
Church and Children of God never lost by
patient suffering.

Eighthly, As I know that Gods Decree in
his determination of judgments shall be ful-
filled, so I am confidently assured, that when
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the time of his deliverance is come, all the power and subtily of the Devill and his instruments, as they shall go no further then he hath limited them, so they shall not hinder him from taking off his Rod when hee pleaseth. For he is able to bring his will to passe by means, without means, and contrary to means. Rather then his children shall not have their due reliefe, The Sea shall part, the Earth shall open and swallow up their adversaries, or fire shall come downe from Heaven and destroy them. And this may comfort Christians, that God reignes and rules as King in Heaven, the cause of his Church and Children is his, and he beholds and governes the inhabitants of the earth, he hath the hearts of all in his hand, hee can turn them or overturn them when hee pleaseth for the good of his, When our ways please him Hee can make our enemies be at peace with us, and the same hand to heale us that hath wounded us, It is he only that can make men to be of one heart, and one minde, and to make all things to work together for the best of them that love him.

To

To conclude, I hope by this time you have received full satisfaction, why I have refused to subscribe, yet let mee assure you that if the Parliament shall think fit to alter that Government, I dare not, in conscience, and duty to the Protestation, refuse to be governed by it.

Be confident, that not only my Prayers, but my true endevours have been, and by Gods Grace shall continue, for Reformation. I know God hath suffered many of his deare Saints, and Children to fall into great and hainous sinnes and offences, yet when he hath duly chastised them, after true repentence hee hath made them greater instruments of his Glory, and the good of his Church, then in former times they were.

I must expect for this, as well as the rest of my endevours for Truth and Peace, your usuall jeeres, scoffs, and censures of reprobation and the like, but my comfort is, that God knoweth who are his, and who are the true Friends and Enemies of the Church

and State, and that I have sincerely discharged my conscience, according to that weake talent I have received, in obedience to the Protestation, for the good of both.

I therefore you shall remayne still my adversaries for so doing, peradventure I may for a while longer suffer, yet it shall comfort me, that it is for wel-doing, Whereas when you shall suffer as evill doers, you may (without timely repentance) everlastingely perish in the gain-sayings of Core. For though handjoyne hand in hand, God will not suffer the wicked to goe unpnnished. If you find any Materiall errour herein informe and convince mee thereof, and I doe assure you on the Faith of a true Protestant, I will endevour Reformation, the like I commend unto you hereby, and expect the same from you as a triall of your profession, which I shall plainly discover if wilfully you continue and persist in a known errour, and so I bid you Farewell,

Remayning a constant Friend to Truth
and

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Remayning a constant Friend to Truth
and

and Peace, the only support under God of
the welfare of the Church and State,

And Yours I. W.

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and the voice, the only labour under God of
the labourer, is this, to bring in his fruits in due time.

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the welfare of the Church and State,

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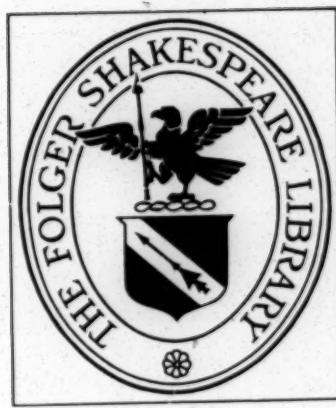
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